The

WHITE PINE

SERIES OF

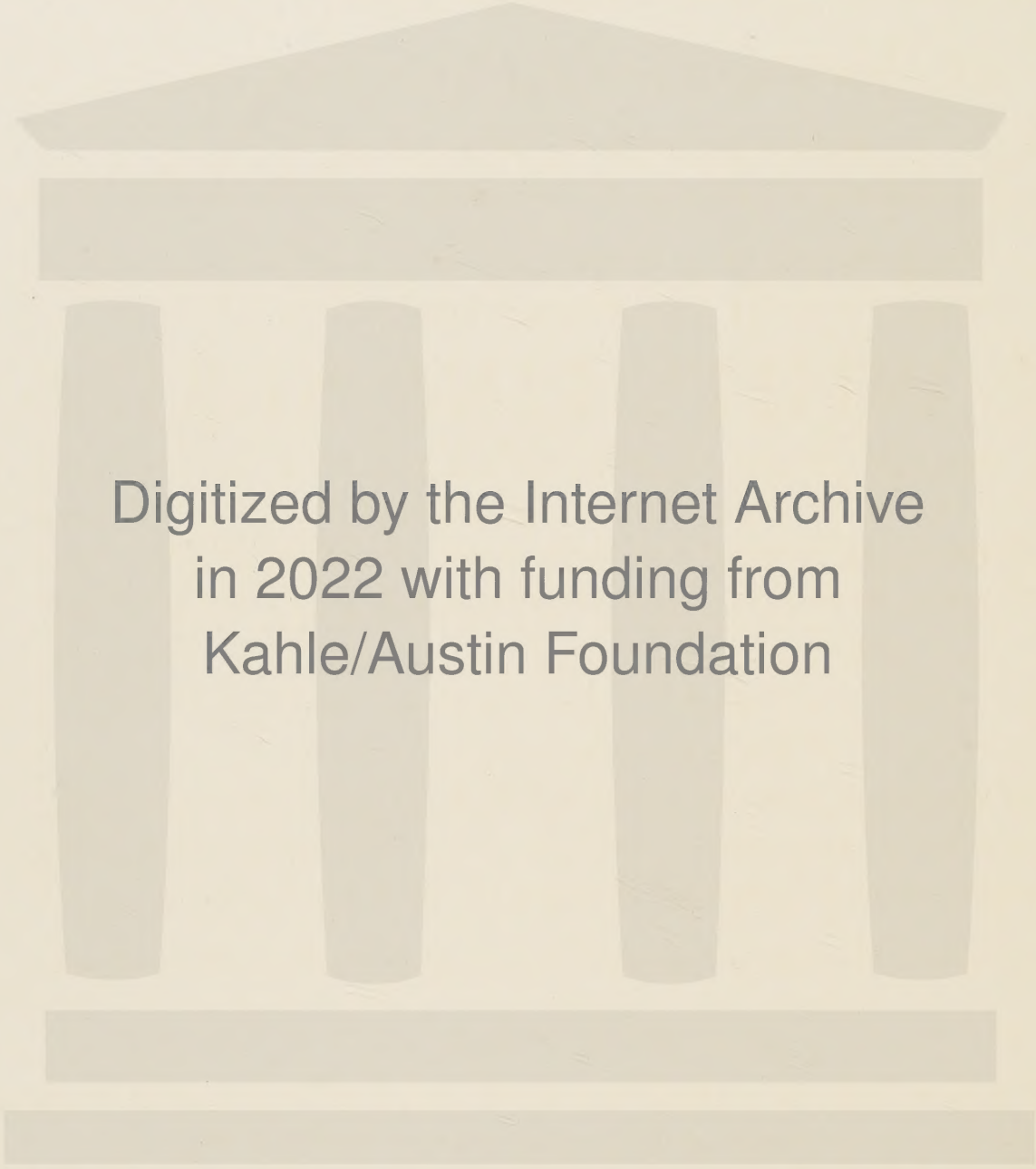
Architectural Monographs

Volume XII *Number* 3

The Burlington County COURT HOUSE AT MOUNT HOLLY NEW JERSEY

BY

Fenimore C. Woolman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AN

Architectural Monograph

The Burlington County Court House at Mount Holly, New Jersey

By Fenimore C. Woolman

Being the THIRD *Number of Volume XII and*
THE SIXTY-SEVENTH MONOGRAPH OF

THE WHITE PINE SERIES

Intimate treatiſes of the ARCHITECTURE of the *American Colonies* and of the *Early Republic* preſented with well ordered completeneſs, to further a broader underſtanding and to create a permanent Record of *Early American* ARCHITECTURE.

RUSSELL F. WHITEHEAD, Editor

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NEW YORK

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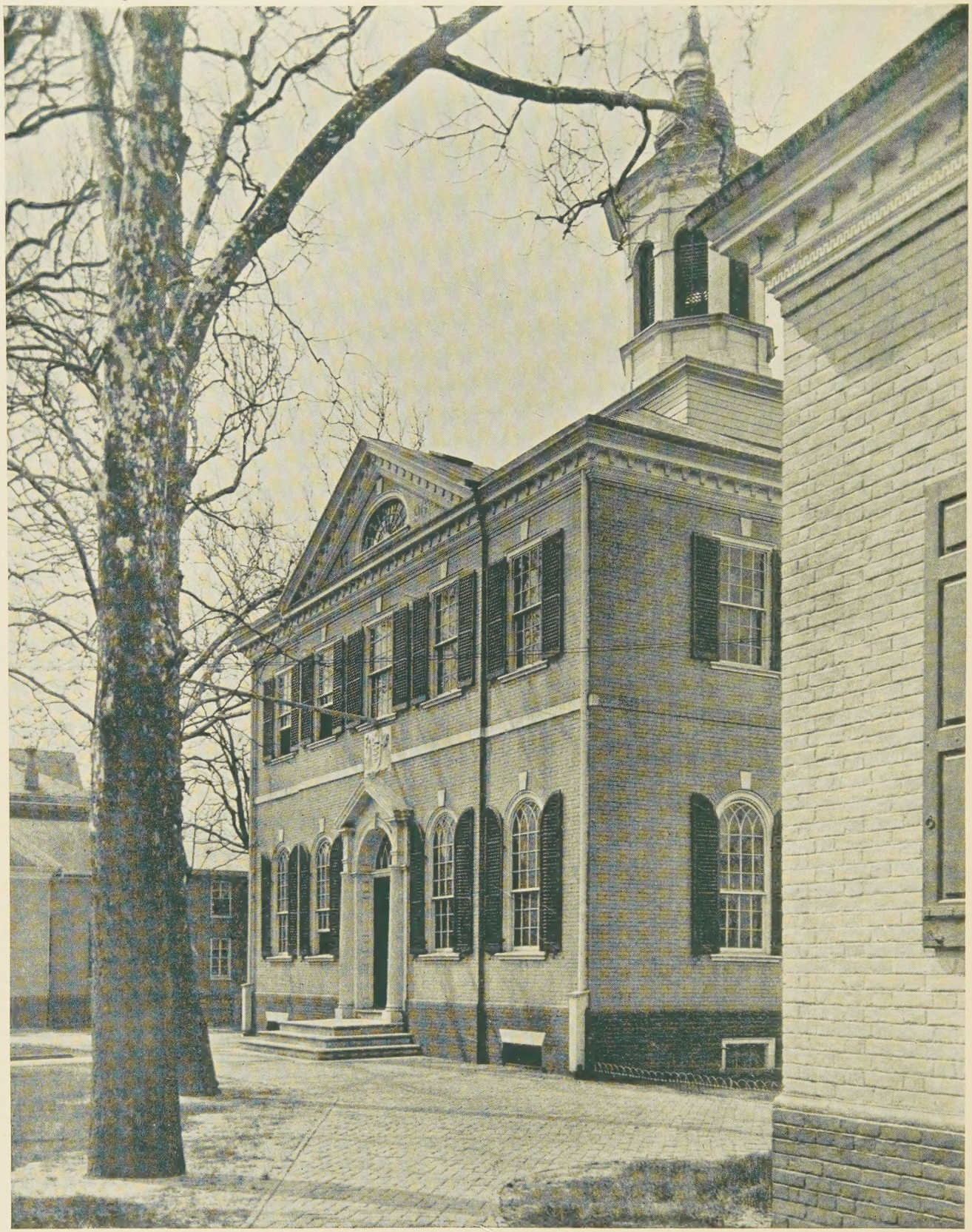


THE BURLINGTON COUNTY COURT HOUSE, MOUNT HOLLY, NEW JERSEY

The Burlington County Court House *at* Mount Holly, New Jersey

by FENIMORE C. WOOLMAN

INSPIRING history often takes place in buildings of inspiring architecture —or inspiring architecture creates an atmosphere condusive to high and ennobling events, as the reader likes. In either case, probably the most famous early American public buildings are the group surrounding Independence Square in Philadelphia, a group composed, you will remember, of the dignified State House, with its arcades and wings, designed by the great amateur architect, Andrew Hamilton, now known as Independence Hall, and the two buildings that complete the group — the Philadelphia County Court House and the City Hall, erected in 1787. Congress sat in the latter building from 1790 to 1800.

In those early days some knowledge of architecture was considered an essential part of every gentleman's education, for at least two reasons; to round out his general knowledge and as a practical tool when the time to build his own dwelling or to assist in the planning of some public building came. The trained professional architect of today was almost unknown. It is not surprising therefore to find that Major Richard Cox, Zachariah Rossell and Joseph Budd, having been entrusted in 1796 with the building of a new County Court House for Burlington County, New Jersey, should have been able to emulate the creator of the Philadelphia City Hall, its dignity and repose having aroused their admiration, and that they or their appointed craftsmen were successful in catching the spirit of the earlier building and adapting it to their own needs and purposes. The Court House which these amateur New Jersey architects conceived is not as well known to the architectural student of today as is "Congress Hall"—not because they were unsuccessful in their purpose to create a beautiful and well constructed building, but rather because Mount Holly is in a "sand hole" in West Jersey, if we use the geographical term used in the early days, several miles from the old city of Burlington, the first capital of West Jersey, and not on the beaten path of the architectural explorer.

The Court House at Mount Holly, is nevertheless, one of our priceless American architectural inheritances, standing virtually as it was built, an enduring memorial to the most elegant period in early American architectural history. Its very dignity precludes any idea of unseemly conduct or lack of majesty in the administration of the business of meting out Justice—yet it was built only after violent and bitter contention.

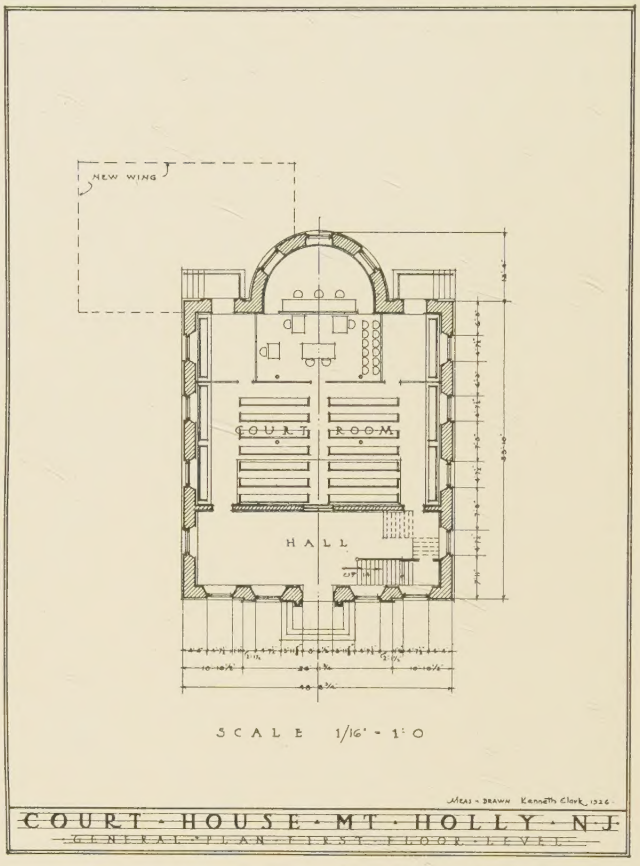
According to the records, the original County Court House, which was built in the city of Burlington on the shores of the Delaware River in 1690, was in such a state of delapidation by 1795, that a large expenditure of money was required to repair it, which money the freeholders refused to vote. An act of legislature was passed, enabling the people to erect a new court house, and authorizing a vote of the people of Burlington County to determine where it should be built, as many thought the public buildings should be nearer the center of population than Burlington, which is at one side of the county. The places nominated were Black Horse, Mount Holly and Burlington. Mount Holly won after much excitement and a hotly contested election. Dr. Read, in his "Annals of Mount Holly" says: "I am informed that at the election held at the Mount Holly Market House, to say where the court house should be built, that some voters came from the pine districts with dingy faces, and after voting, retired to the saw mill race, washed themselves, returned and voted again. This may have been true, but for want of proper authentication, we may consider it the product of a romantic imagination and place no reliance upon it." But, such propaganda, evidently rife at the time, had its effect in keeping alive feelings of resentment, however amusing it may be a century and a half later.

The citizens of Burlington were so aggravated by the loss of the court house that it would have been unwise, if not actually unsafe for a Mount Hollian to show himself in Burlington. The indignity of being shorn of their pride was never forgiven or forgotten by the old citizens of Burlington, but now time has healed the wound.

The Mount Hollians being victorious, the court

house was erected in 1796 on land purchased in that year from Joseph Powell for 210 pounds. The contracting carpenter for the building was Michael Rush, a native of Mount Holly. Samuel Lewis was a master carpenter and assisted in and superintended the construction. Undoubtedly they were aided in their work by a careful study of the City Hall in Philadelphia and by the early architectural reference books containing measured drawings of Georgian details which appeared in America toward the middle of the eighteenth century.

Like the little building in Philadelphia, the court house is an oblong structure of brick with marble and white wood trim, two stories high, hip roofed and surmounted in the center by a well proportioned octagonal open cupola. On the front a pediment springs from the cornice over a slightly projecting central section of the facade. Unlike the "Congress Hall," in that, instead of a three sided bay breaking the rear wall, it has a semicircular wall to form the end of the court room.



We feel that the "designers" of the Mount Holly building have been more successful in the treatment of the stoop and doorway feature than their brethren in Philadelphia. The simple dignity and scale of the doorway with its graceful fanlight above are in accord with the round headed windows of the lower story. These windows are set effectively in the brick arched openings with marble sills and keystones. Like "Congress Hall," the round topped windows have sliding sash with twelve paned lower sashes and upper sashes with ten small ornamental panes to make up the semicircle above twelve rectangular panes. The upper story windows have twenty-four panes except the one over the entrance, which has thirty panes. They are square headed with flat brick arches and marble keystones.

The brick walls are surmounted by a hand tooled wood cornice, its coved member having a series of recessed arches and the Grecian band or double denticulated moulding beneath. At the second floor level a white marble belt course has been used. The coat-of-arms cut in marble and set in the wall over the front door was a later addition, being the gift of one Isaac Hazalhurt.

In 1807 the Surrogate's office to the north and the Clerk's office to the south of the court house were built, making a most attractive group.

No less interesting than the outward appearance is the aspect of the spacious hall with its beautiful staircase with a half-way landing. As originally planned there was a large folding door in the center of the hall, opening into the court room; on each side of the door there was a gallery with seats one above the other for spectators. In the center of the court was a platform elevated some twelve inches above the aisle and surrounded by a high railing with turned balusters of slender grace. The space was used for the grand and petit jurors. The illustration shows the court room as it is today with a rearrangement of the spectators' seats, railing, desks, jury box, etc.

The climb into the cupola from the upper story disclosed the generous roof timbers obtained in the days when Mount Holly was on the edge of the great forest area known as the Pines or Pine Barrens. The old name "Pine Barrens" implies something like a desert but as a matter of fact, the region produced magnificent forest trees. The original growth, pine in many places, consisted also of lofty oak, hickory, gum, ash, chestnut, etc., interspersed with dogwood, sassafras and holly and in the swamps the valuable cedar.

Like the early houses of West Jersey, the Court House at Mount Holly is of simple, well proportioned architecture of a distinctive type, less luxuriant, massive and exuberant than that across the river in Pennsylvania although both were evidently derived from the Christopher Wren school. The old court house seen today in its setting of ancient and still flourishing button-wood trees, seems to reflect faithfully the simple feeling of the Quaker people.

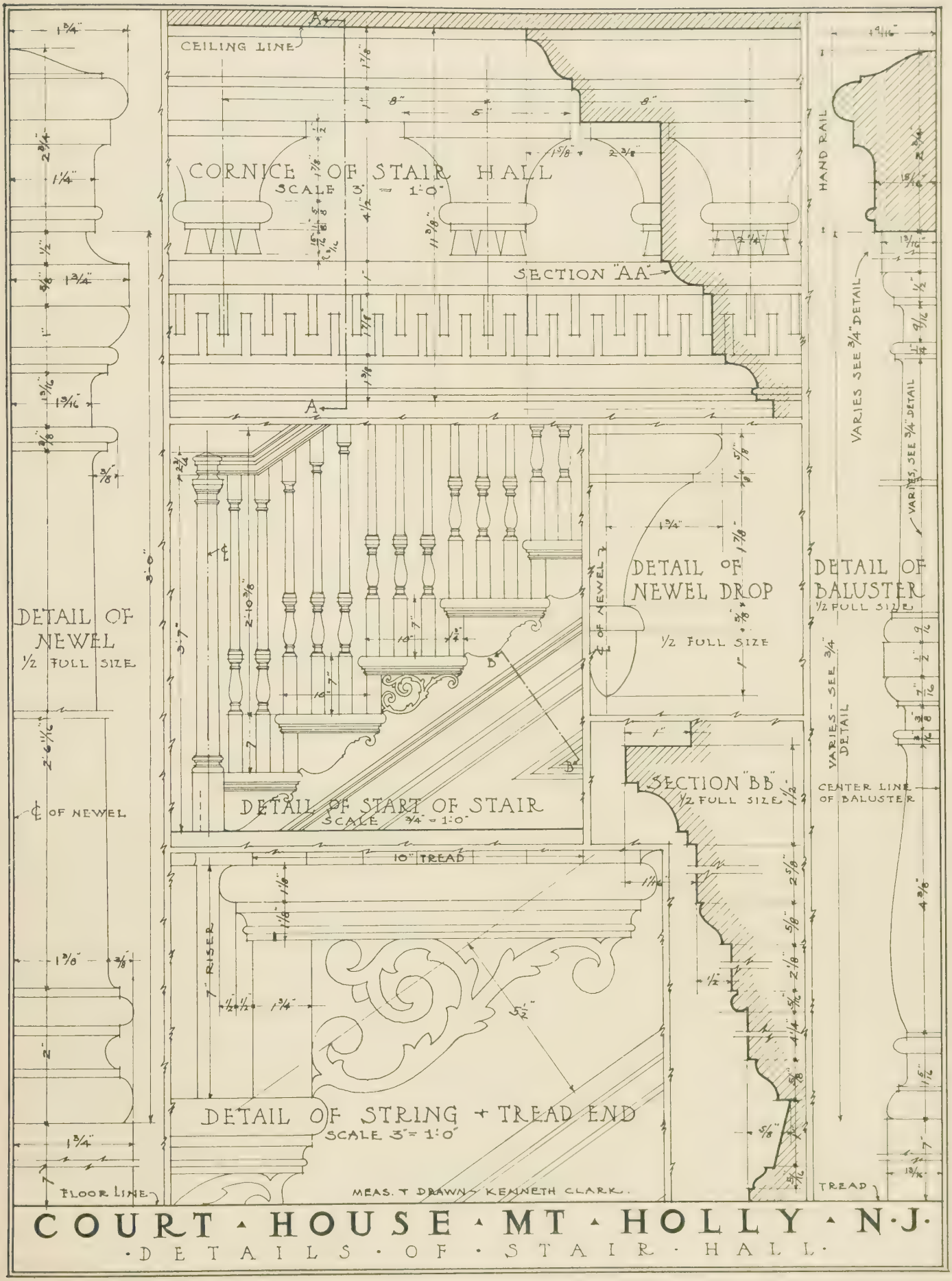
THE BURLINGTON COUNTY COURT HOUSE, MOUNT HOLLY, NEW JERSEY

THE BURLINGTON COUNTY BUILDINGS, MOUNT HOLLY, NEW JERSEY

INTERIOR OF COURT ROOM—BURLINGTON COUNTY COURT HOUSE, MOUNT HOLLY, NEW JERSEY

Detail of Stairway

THE BURLINGTON COUNTY COURT HOUSE, MOUNT HOLLY, NEW JERSEY



COURT · HOUSE · MT · HOLLY · N·J·

·DETAILS · OF · STAIR · HALL·

Rear Entrance and Wall of Court Room

THE BURLINGTON COUNTY COURT HOUSE, MOUNT HOLLY, NEW JERSEY

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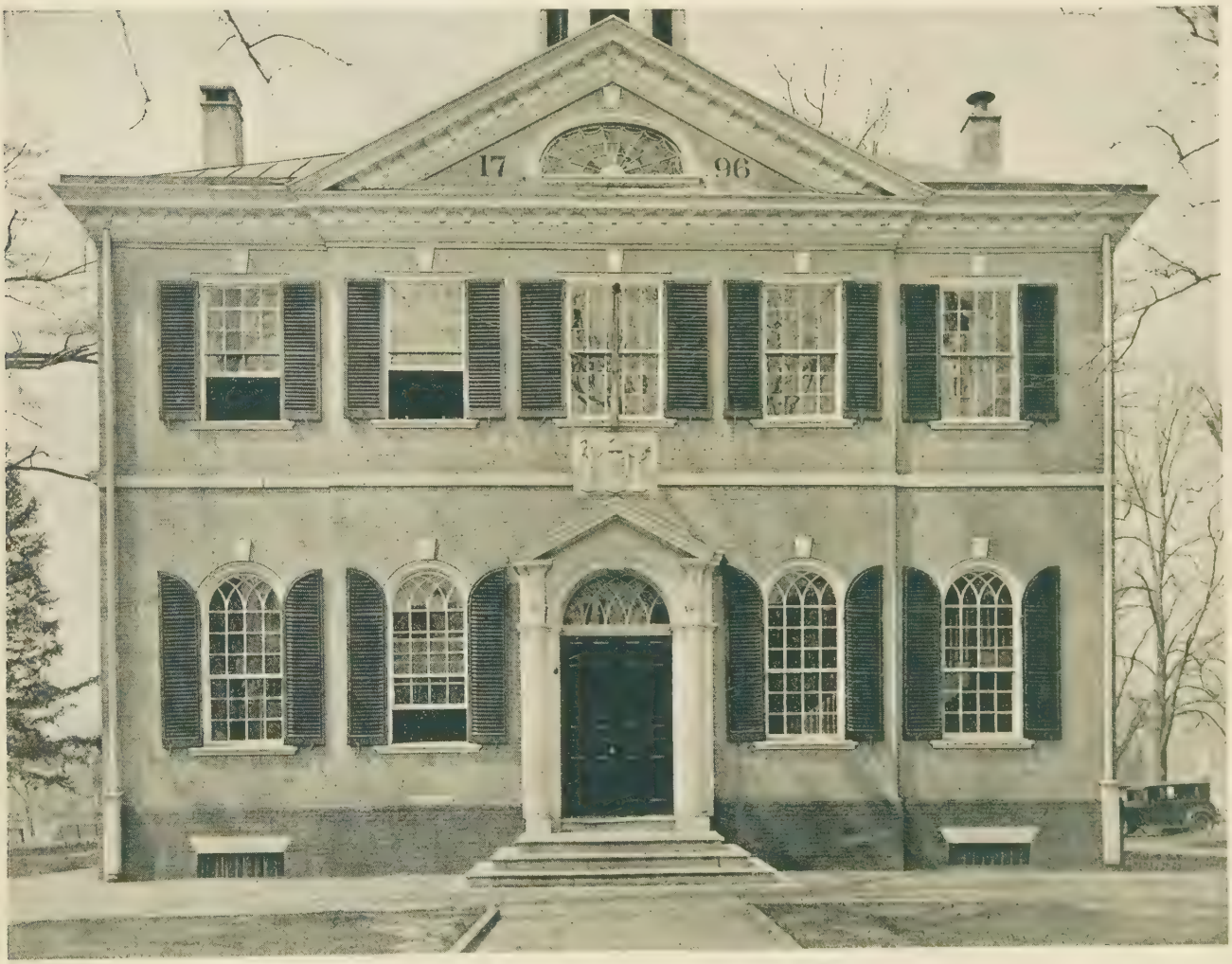
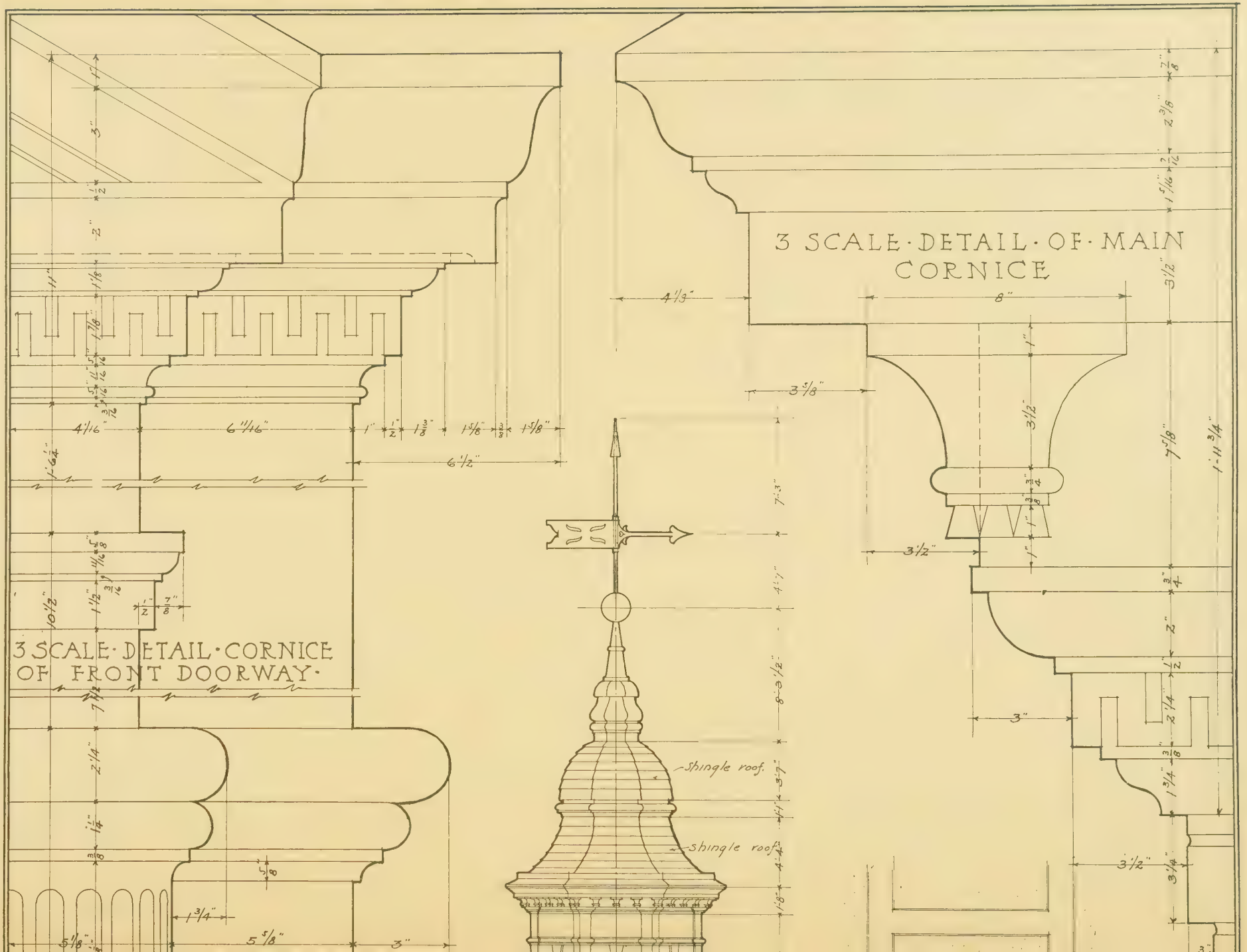
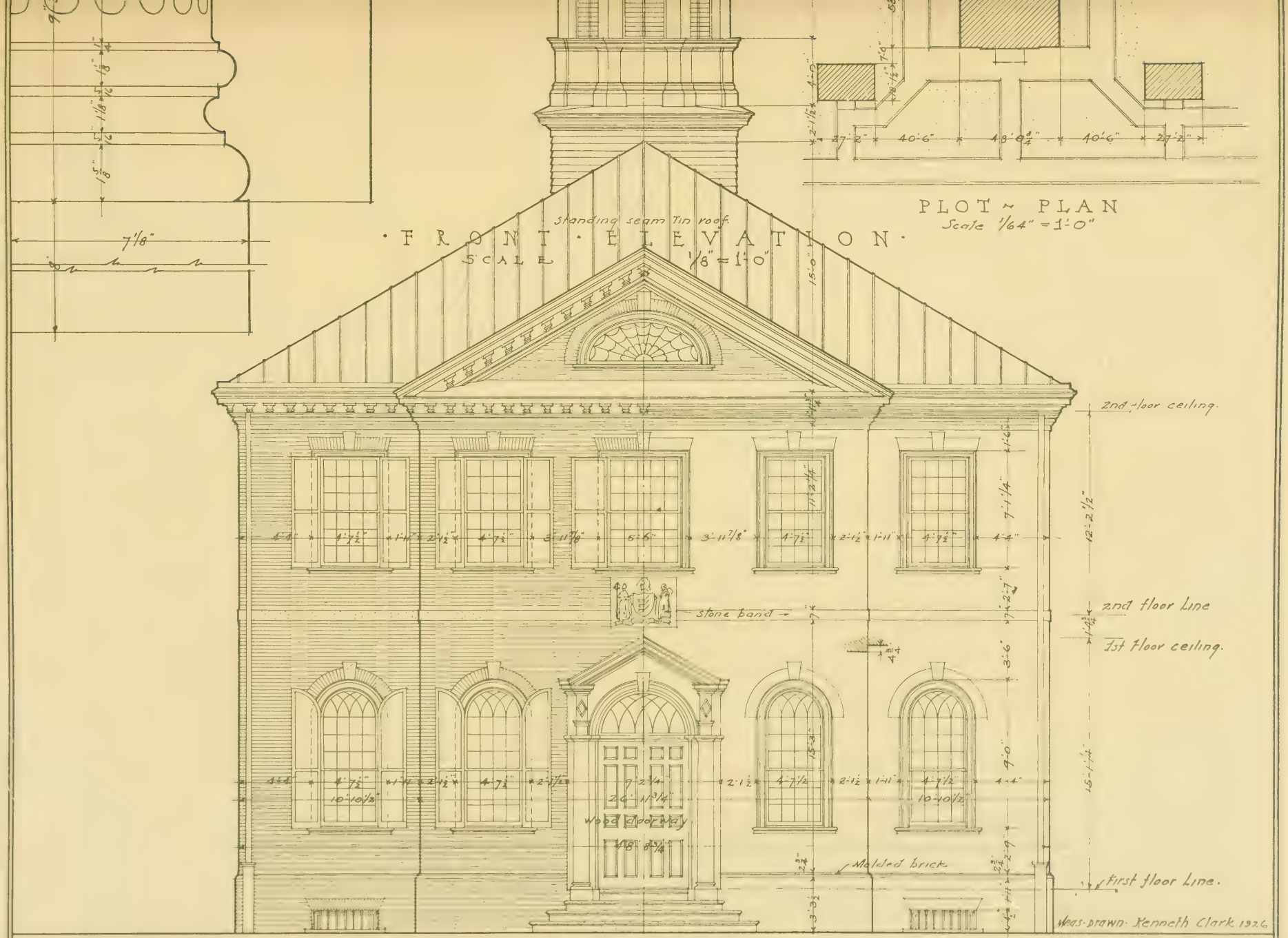
The George F. Lindsay Collection

The Burlington County
COURT HOUSE *at* MOUNT HOLLY, N. J.

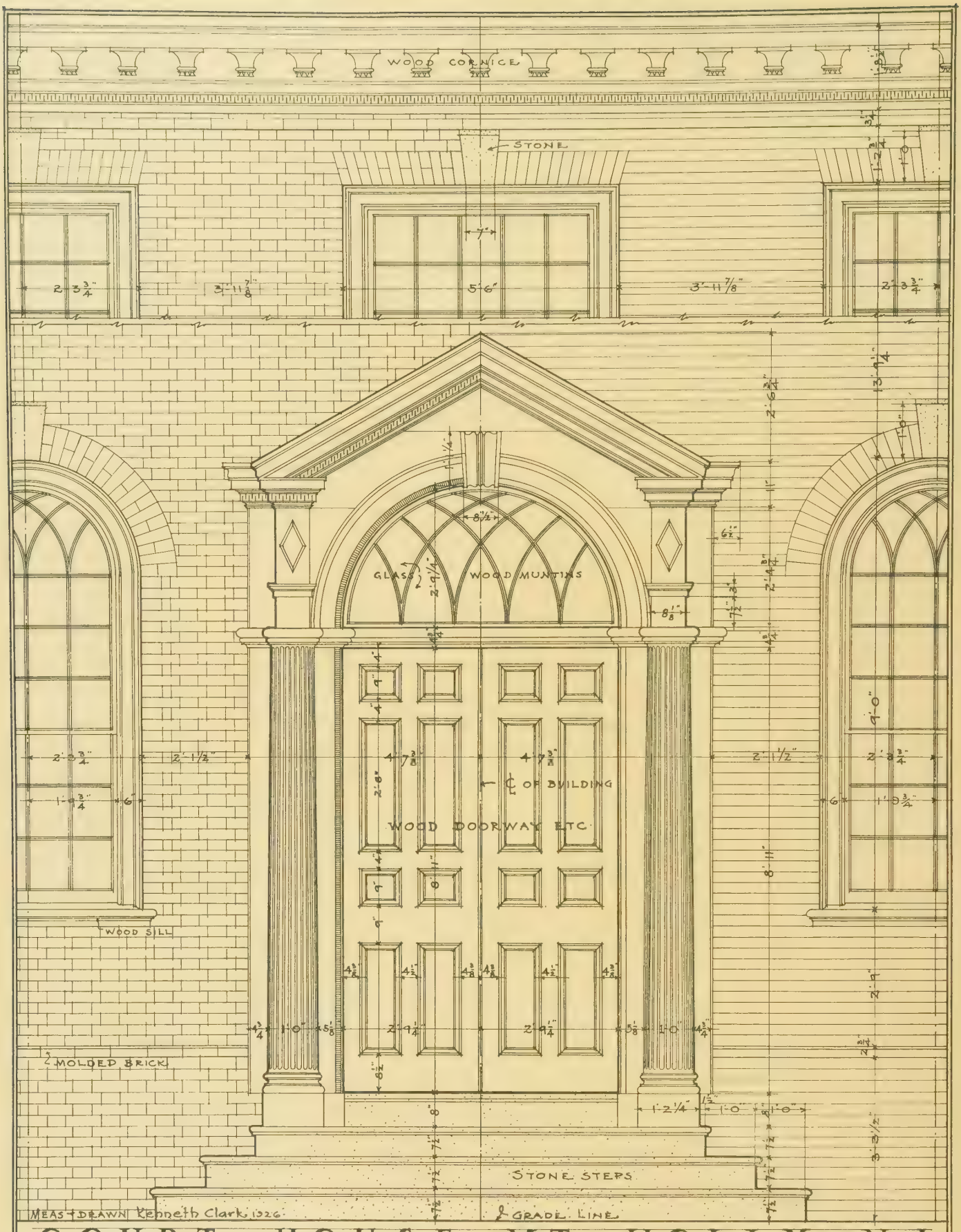


DIRECT VIEW OF FRONT ELEVATION


3 SCALE · DETAIL · CORNICE OF FRONT DOORWAY ·
3 SCALE · DETAIL · OF · MAIN CORNICE
Shingle roof.
Shingle roof.


PLOT ~ PLAN
Scale 1/64" = 1'-0"
· F R O N T · E L E V A T I O N ·
SCALE 1/8" = 1'-0"
Standing seam Tin roof
Stone band
2nd floor ceiling.
2nd floor Line
1st floor ceiling.
First floor Line.
Molded brick
Meas. drawn. Kenneth Clark 1926
· C O U R T · H O U S E · M T · H O L L Y · N · J ·
FRONT · ELEVATION · AND · VARIOUS · DETAILS ·

Drawing reproduced exactly at the scale marked



These Drawings are reproduced exactly at the scale marked

Detail of Front Elevation

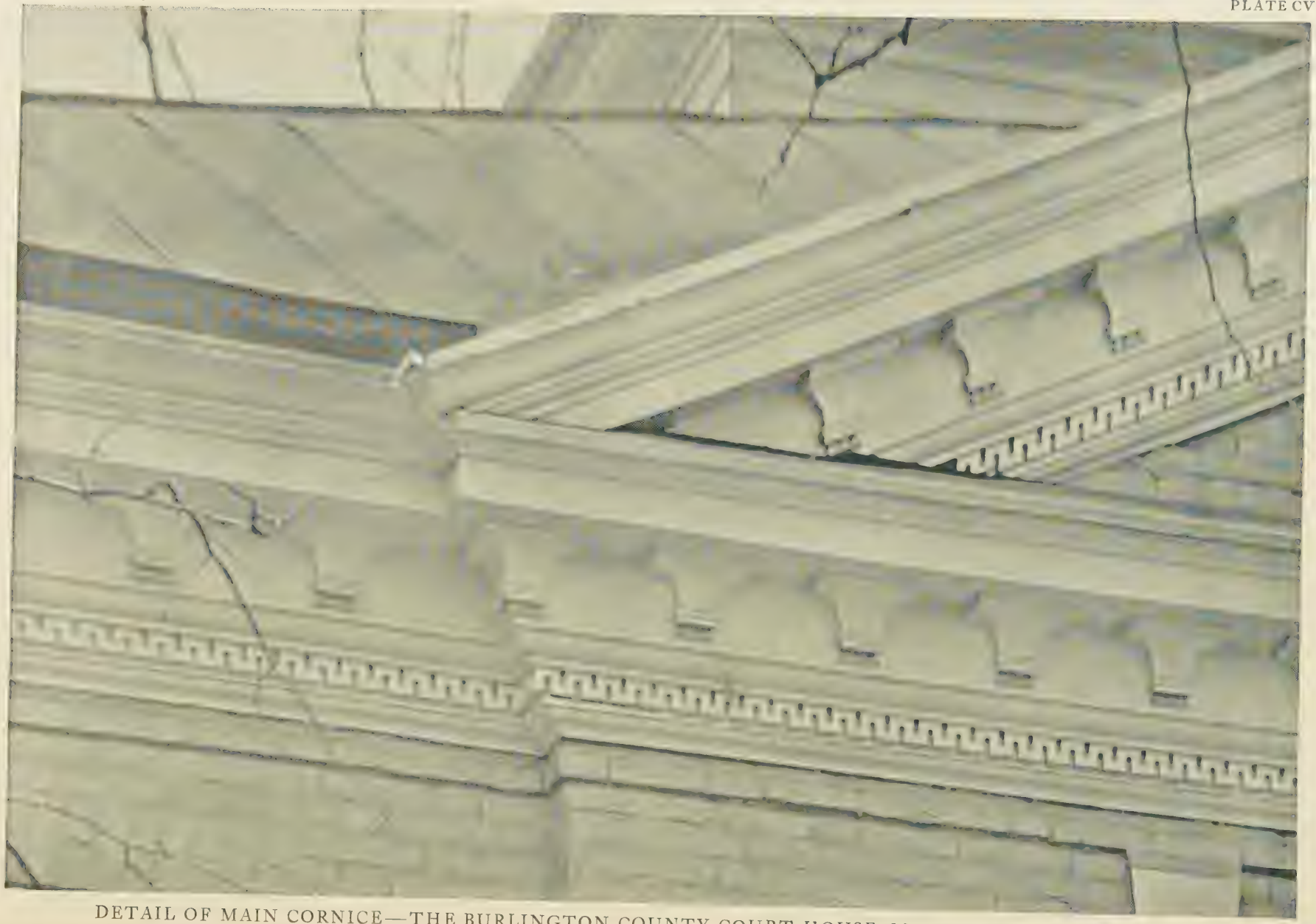
THE BURLINGTON COUNTY COURT HOUSE, MOUNT HOLLY, NEW JERSEY

Detail of Front Entrance Doorway

THE BURLINGTON COUNTY COURT HOUSE, MOUNT HOLLY, NEW JERSEY

Detail of Rear Entrance Doorway

THE BURLINGTON COUNTY COURT HOUSE, MOUNT HOLLY, NEW JERSEY

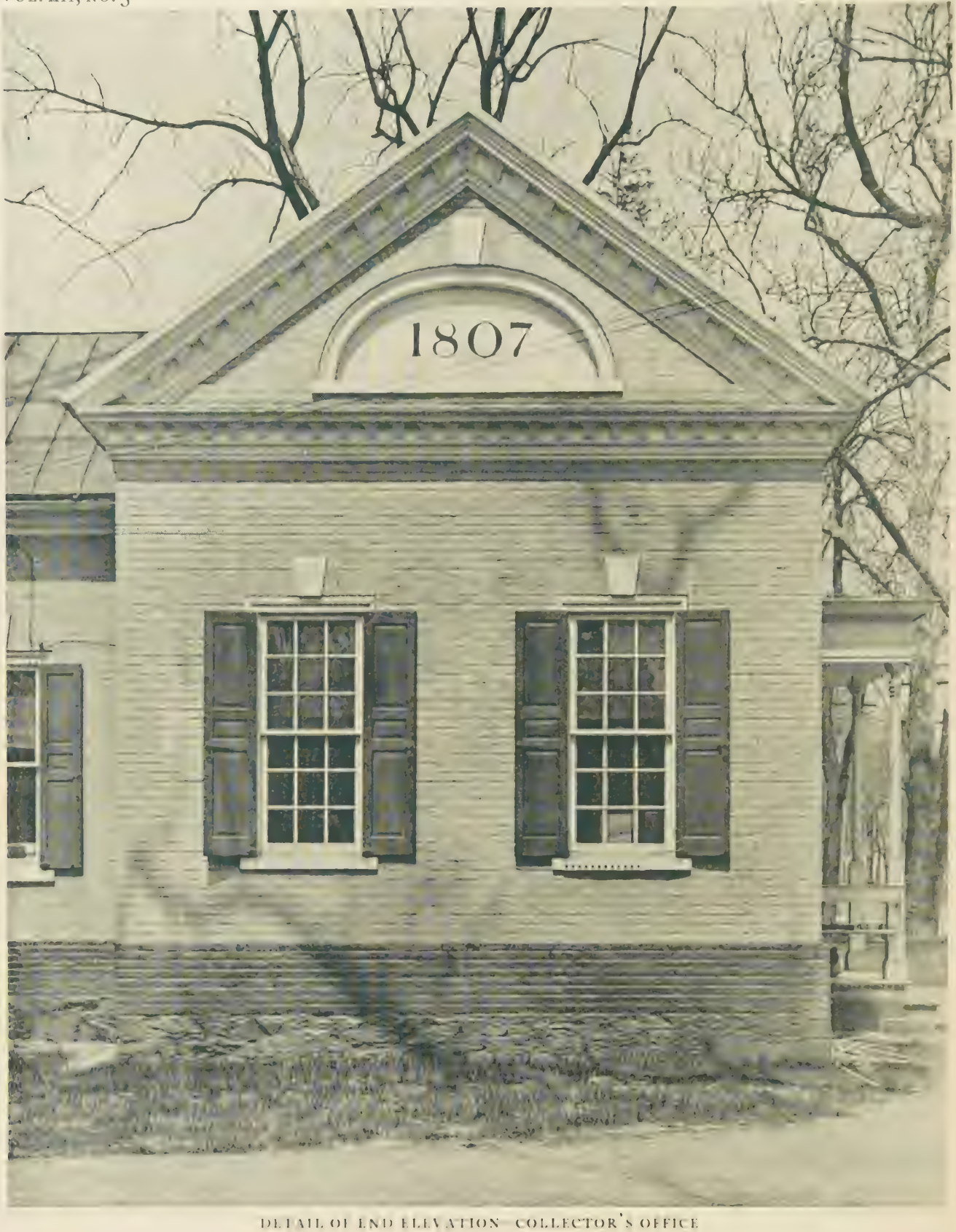


DETAIL OF MAIN CORNICE—THE BURLINGTON COUNTY COURT HOUSE, MOUNT HOLLY, NEW JERSEY

CORNICE DETAIL—COLLECTOR'S OFFICE

WINDOW DETAIL—COURT HOUSE

THE BURLINGTON COUNTY BUILDINGS, MOUNT HOLLY, NEW JERSEY



DETAIL OF END ELEVATION—COLLECTOR'S OFFICE

THE BURLINGTON COUNTY BUILDINGS—MOUNT HOLLY, NEW JERSEY

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JUNE, 1926

THE SESQUICENTENNIAL

PHILADELPHIA, the seat of early American nationalism, on May 31st, opened the gate of her Sesquicentennial Exposition. Not many persons now living saw the Centennial Exposition of 1879 held on the Fairmount Park site, which eclipsed everything of the sort attempted up to that time in this country—to be eclipsed in turn by the Chicago Exposition of 1893 commemorating the 400th anniversary of the discovery of America.

The present exposition is perhaps less national and international in scope than the one of fifty years ago, but the 1926 exposition deserves and will have the support of all Americans interested in our past and our future. To those who visit the exposition and the scenes of our birth and infancy as a nation, it means a quickening of patriotism and of the historical imagination to establish personal contact with Independence Hall, to walk through Independence Square and to recreate the outward aspect of Philadelphia of 1776.

Philadelphia has preserved her ancient historic association as few other American cities have. She is still a real shrine for the patriotic and architectural pilgrim.

THE AMERICAN RENAISSANCE

THE tremendous strides that have been made in the last few years in our appreciation of Early American Architecture are not due to any new discoveries in that field, but to an awakening on the part of our architects and of the general public to the true value of this country's early work. This same historic architectural background has been known of and studied for many years, but general interest was lacking and except for a few of the better known towns, such as Salem, Philadelphia, Marblehead, etc., the great majority of early American towns have been neglected by the recorders and their praises unsung.

The so called "Colonial" house of the 1880-90 period could not be classed as a modern translation of the heritage our forefathers left us. The architect of that time had scant knowledge of the true basis on which his design was supposed to rest. All sorts of foreign motives were falsely introduced. The real significance and simplicity of the early work were clouded in a mass of swags, badly scaled detail and showy elements which went to make up a whole that was as far from the ideal of the early builder as it was possible to get with the use of the same basic materials for execution.

The "Colonial" of that awful period had a set formula of columns, pediments, eggs and darts and dentils that were thrown together on the drafting board and which resulted in the atrocities that disfigured so many suburban communities.

The last few years, however, have seen the beginning of a real American Renaissance. Study and investigation have shown that the early American types have an infinite variety of interest ranging from the sophisticated "mansion" of the larger early cities to the unpretentious farmhouse; from the house which is a beautiful and chaste example of the best of the Georgian period with detail masterly in execution to the farm "parlor" simple, with hardly a molding and yet bearing the unmistakable signs of refinement and taste requiring no ornament to exemplify them. Through the entire gamut runs the stream of reason, simplicity and appropriateness that is the hall-mark of all good native art.

Our ancestors built their homes and their public buildings honestly and efficiently; this is proved by their endurance which has carried them through the years intact, except for the vandal hands of the "restorer" and "improver." That their sense of the beautiful was the rule and not the exception is attested by the predominance of so many remarkable examples of architectural design in the old work that survives.

We have heard it stated that much of the beauty of the old work was accidental and simply the result of building for a practical result, and thus, by simplicity attaining a purity of line, a spacing of parts that gave them their undeniable charm. Many of the smaller and simpler buildings owed much to this practice, but such examples as the Read house at New Castle, Delaware, the Admiral Cowles house at Farmington, Connecticut, to mention only two of many of equal merit, all of a more sophisticated mold, are undoubtedly the result of work by minds and hands educated in the subtleties of true architectural design. Their beauty was premeditated and foreseen, perhaps before a stick of timber was cut. The trained architect knows that good architecture does not just happen; the creation of its beauties is too intricate for that, and depends on too many elements that have to be welded into a pleasing composition. Every great design is created from the solid foundation of knowledge on the part of its designer.

That our early architects and builders were men of education whose ability was due to a real understanding of their arts is beyond question and from them, through the study of their work, our modern world can learn much of design, of thoroughness and of the creation of beautiful buildings that will live to give pleasure in the years to come.

THE MANUFACTURER'S TRADE MARK

THE personal signature of an individual upon a commercial writing, validates that writing—stands for the responsibility of the signatory—binds him to the terms of the writing. The trade mark of a manufacturer upon his product carries with it all the force of his personal signature. By the trade mark upon his product the manufacturer binds himself to maintain the known and accepted standard of quality and to deliver it in his trade marked goods.

Moral standards are as high among manufacturers as among professional men. There is every reason for architects to give their confidence to trade marked lumber, as compared with products not bearing the personal guarantee of the manufacturer.

On page 24 of this issue attention is called to the advantage of specifying lumber by nationally accepted standard trade association lumber nomenclature, backed by the guarantee of the manufacturers' specie and trade mark.

·WOOD·CONSTRUCTION·DETAILS·

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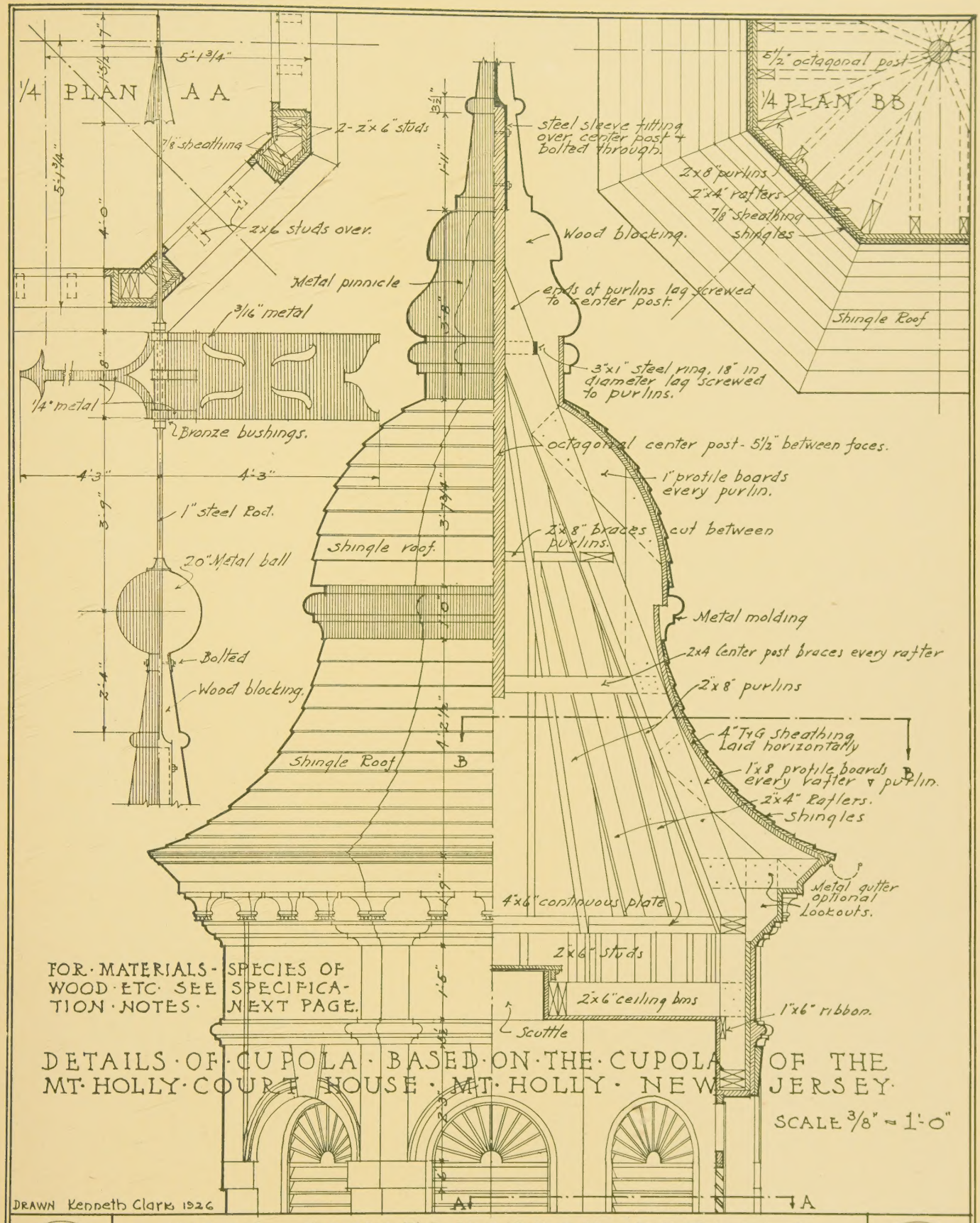

FOR MATERIALS - SPECIES OF WOOD ETC. SEE SPECIFICATION NOTES - NEXT PAGE.

DETAILS OF CUPOLA BASED ON THE CUPOLA OF THE MT. HOLLY COURT HOUSE, MT. HOLLY, NEW JERSEY.

SCALE 3/8" = 1'-0"

DRAWN Kenneth Clark 1926

· WOOD · CONSTRUCTION · DETAILS ·
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Wood Construction Details

Notes for the Specification Writer

Nationally accepted standard trade association lumber terms should be used in an architect's specification, rather than the obsolete or local grade names. This will eliminate much of the confusion now existing between the architect, builder and lumber dealer and will also save the client the possibility of having to pay a "safety premium", necessitated by specifications which are not clearly understood by those who contract to supply the lumber. In the suggestions that follow, offered for the assistance of the specification writer in connection with the wood construction details, shown on the preceding page, the data is stated in terms which have become standard in the producing districts from which the different species are obtained.

LUMBER: It not infrequently happens that the service value of an otherwise excellent piece of construction work is seriously damaged by the shrinkage of green lumber or by the use of a species unsuited to the work at hand. To provide against the delivery of green or only partially seasoned lumber and to assure the delivery of the species ordered it is suggested, therefore, that the following general clause be included in all specifications where lumber is specified:

> **Specifications-General:** "All lumber for any purpose mentioned in these specifications shall be at least air dry when delivered for use and shall conform to the standard lumber association nomenclature and grading rules of the producing district from which the particular kind of lumber furnished shall come".

FRAMING OR STRUCTURAL LUMBER: The principal lumber producing sections of the country produce a number of woods, all of which have sufficient strength and stiffness for the structural items in ordinary building construction. Specifications for structural items should, therefore, be sufficiently flexible to permit the selection of that wood which can be purchased most economically in a given locality, a matter determined principally by the distance from the producing region and consequent freight haul.

Nor should clear lumber be insisted upon in the species selected. There are many defects which do not impair the strength or serviceability of lumber for structural purposes and to insist upon a grade better than that necessary to meet the requirements would be extravagant and wasteful.

The following specification is suggested.

CENTER POST, PLATES, BEAMS, RAFTERS, PURLINS, STUDDING AND BRACING:

> **Specifications:** "All structural members, including center post, plates, ceiling beams, rafters, purlins, studding and bracing, shall be No. 1 Common grade Douglas Fir (or Pacific Coast Hemlock) or (NorthernPine) or (Fir-and-Larch)".

SHEATHING OR ROOF BOARDS: The structural requirements for this item being less rigid than for the structural members, a lower grade and a wider range of species should be permitted for reasons of economy.

> **Specification:** "Sheathing or roof boards shall be No. 3 Common grade Northern Pine or (Pondosa Pine) or (Fir-and-Larch) or (White Fir) or (No. 1 Common Douglas Fir) or (Pacific Coast Hemlock), 4" wide and dressed and matched (D&M)".

OUTSIDE TRIM: The two most important requirements for an exterior finish wood, durability when exposed to the weather and ease of working under the carpenter's and wood carver's tools, are found to a higher degree in *Genuine* White Pine than in any other wood. This natural durability and soft, even texture, plus a remarkable ability to stay in place, maintain a tight joint and take and hold paint, have made *Genuine* White Pine the preferred wood for outside trim in the better class of construction.

Since other woods are not infrequently sold as Genuine White Pine it is suggested that the phrase "Weyerhaeuser standard of manufacture" be inserted in the specification as a means of protection for the buyer. Weyerhaeuser mills are now stamping each piece in the better grades of *Genuine* White Pine with a species mark "Genuine White Pine" in addition to the manufacturer's trademark.

> **Specifications:** "All lumber used for exterior trim (including cornice, carved and moulded work, window frames, siding, doorway and door, panels, cupola, shutters, louvres, etc.,) shall be cut from Genine White Pine (Pinus Strobus or Pinus Monticola) of the Weyerhaeuser standard of manufacture, free from sapwood and of such grade as to yield practically clear faces on all exposed surfaces".

SHINGLES: Western Red Cedar holds the same position for roofing purposes that White Pine does for outside trim. In fact, Western Red Cedar is so eminently fitted for a shingle wood that practically all shingles today are cut from this species. The only precautions necessary are to see that the proper grade and thickness of shingles are specified and that they are properly laid with double galvanized or othe durable nails.

> **Specifications:** "Shingles shall be 5 to 2 (5 butts measuring 2 inches) Western Red Cedar, "A" grade and 100% vertical grain as per the new American Lumber Standard Specifications for 16" shingles".

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WHITE PINE	PONDOSA PINE	IDAHO SPRUCE	DOUGLAS FIR
NORWAY PINE	RED FIR AND LARCH	PACIFIC COAST HEMLOCK	WESTERN RED CEDAR

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